United Nations

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

^ Secretary-General says he is "more hopeful than before" about prospects for comprehensive solution to hostage situation in both Lebanon and Israel.

^ Secretary-General meets in Geneva with French Foreign Minister, his Executive Delegate, and Special Representative.

^ Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament undertakes its own high-altitude aerial surveys over Iraq.

^ Secretary-General welcomes recommendations to reduce strength of United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission for greater efficiency and economy.

^ Kuwait asks Secretary-General to exert pressure on Iraq to secure release of Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees.

^ Secretary-General welcomes border agreements between Chile and Argentina.

^ Special Committee on decolonization calls for progress towards self-determination in New Caledonia.

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Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar told a news conference today in Geneva that he was "more hopeful than before" about a solution to the situation of hostages held both in Israel and Lebanon, and that he intended to continue "strongly" in his efforts to seek the release of all the detainees.

Yesterday, in London, the Secretary-General met with the recently released British detainee, John McCarthy, who publicly handed over to the Secretary-General the letter from his captors, the Islamic Jihad organization.

In the letter, which was made public today at Headquarters, the Islamic Jihad promised to release all detainees within 24 hours if the

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Secretary-General would make a personal endeavour, within a comprehensive solution, to secure the release of all detainees throughout the world.

Following his meeting with Mr. McCarthy yesterday, the Secretary-General told the press that Mr. McCarthy's presence with him and the release of United States detainee, Edward A. Tracy, and the French detainee, Jerome Leyraud, were "all expressions of goodwill". "My duty now", he said, "is to maintain my efforts with the cooperation of all countries directly or indirectly concerned". He said he remained fully committed to doing his best "until the end in order to totally solve this humanitarian problem". He would do whatever was necessary, he said, to obtain the release of the hostages, including going to the Middle East if he felt that was necessary.

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Today, the Secretary-General met in Geneva with the Foreign Minister of France, Roland Dumas, with whom he discussed the international situation including the problem of the hostages, the situation in the Middle East, the question of the Persian Gulf, Yugoslavia and Cambodia.

Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar also met with his Executive Delegate, Sadruddin Aga Khan, with whom he reviewed the humanitarian situation in the Persian Gulf region.

Yesterday evening, upon his arrival in Geneva from London, the Secretary-General met the Coordinator for Lebanese Affairs in the Israeli Defense Ministry, Uri Lubrani, and the Deputy Director-General of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Yohanan Bein. They reviewed the situation in the light of the release of the detainees, John McCarthy, Edward Tracy and Jerome Leyraud, and of the letter that had been sent by Mr. McCarthy's captors. The Secretary-General said he would continue his efforts.

The Secretary-General was scheduled to meet today, with his Special Representative in the Middle East, Eduard Brunner and the Federal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Klaus Jacobi.

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A United Nations spokesman told correspondents today that the Special Commission, set up under Security Council resolution 687 (1991) to overlook Iraqi Disarmament, had decided to undertake its own high-altitude aerial surveys of Iraq in order to determine further designations of Iraqi weapon sites for inspection. The Commission is required to monitor and secure, on an ongoing basis, Iraqi compliance with the terms of the Council's resolution at designated and declared sites, and with regard to the movement of material and items from such sites.

The spokesman said the Commission had requested from the United States Government a high-altitude one-seater aircraft designed for making aerial

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surveys, and had confirmed that the first such flight by this aircraft had taken place "over the weekend". Photographs of all sites, locations, facilities and objects surveyed, would be provided to the Special Commission.

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The Secretary-General has welcomed recommendations from the Chief Military Observer of United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) to reduce its strength in order to achieve greater efficiency and economy.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 6 August, the Secretary-General said that he had found the recommendations to be well-based, since the situation in UNIKOM's area of operations remained calm. The eventual reduction of some 45 per cent in the Mission's strength would produce "appreciable savings", he said.

He said it was his intention to approach the troop-contributing countries in order to effect the adjustments as quickly as possible to minimize administrative and personal inconvenience for all concerned.

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Kuwait has asked the Secretary-General to do "everything within his power" to exert pressure on the Iraqi authorities to secure the release of 1,839 Kuwaiti nationals, who, it says, are presently imprisoned or detained in Iraq.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 8 August, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait, Mohammad A. Abulhasan, expressed hope that all States and international organization would condemn "the inhumane practices" of the Iraqi authorities in detaining thousands of Kuwaiti nationals and persons of other countries who are residents of Kuwait.

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A United Nations spokesman said today that the Secretary-General welcomed the agreement signed recently by the Presidents of Chile and Argentina to find a solution to all outstanding differences regarding the borders between the two countries.

The spokesman said the Secretary-General expressed "deep satisfaction" with the display of understanding and solidarity, which was fully consistent with the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter.

The Agreement is based on the 1984 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the two countries.

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The Special Committee on decolonization, currently meeting in New York, has adopted a resolution inviting all parties involved in the question of New Caledonia to continue promoting a framework for the peaceful progress of the Territory towards an act of self-determination in which all the options would be open, and which would safeguard the rights of all New Caledonians. The text of the resolution was sponsored by Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

In a statement before the Committee, Jacques Serimin Boenghi, petitioner from the Kanak Socialist Liberation Front (FLNKS), said that France still exercised its sovereignty over the colonized Kanak people, and called on the French Government to make every effort to support the independence process in the Territory.

Speaking on behalf of members of the South Pacific Forum (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), the representative of Vanuatu, Robert Van Lierop, noted the positive measures taken by the French authorities in New Caledonia to promote equitable political, economic and social development in the Territory in order to provide a framework for its peaceful evolution to self-determination.

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